



NEWS

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Garden State Preservation Trust OKs \$129.8M for Farmland Preservation Projects

The Garden State Preservation Trust (GSPT) today approved the State Agriculture Development Committee's request for \$129.8 million in farmland preservation funding to help preserve farms in 18 counties. The GSPT will forward the approved request to the Legislature for consideration.

"This funding will further our efforts to save farms in communities across the state and help guarantee a strong future for our agricultural industry here in the Garden State," said Agriculture Secretary Charles M. Kuperus, who chairs the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC).

The approved funding covers a number of programs in which the SADC, county and local governments, and nonprofit organizations purchase the development easements (or development rights) on farmland or purchase farmland outright for preservation purposes. Following is a breakdown on SADC program funding approved today by the GSPT:

- \$39.8 million in grants to counties to fund the majority of the costs to preserve 107 farms covering 6,280 acres through the county easement purchase program.
- \$29.5 million for the SADC to purchase development easements on up to 124 farms covering 7,537 acres through the direct easement purchase program.
- \$8 million in grants to counties to preserve up to 12 farms covering 4,058 acres in the Pinelands under the Pinelands county easement purchase program.
- \$25 million for the SADC to purchase farmland outright from willing sellers under its fee simple program. Under this program, the SADC re-sells the land at public auction to the highest bidder with deed restrictions permanently protecting the land for agricultural purposes.
- \$25 million for grants to municipalities and counties to preserve farms in 44 farmland preservation project areas they have identified under the planning incentive grant program.
- \$2.5 million to provide up to 50 percent cost-sharing grants to non-profit organizations seeking to preserve six farms covering 1,489 acres under the nonprofit grant program.

The SADC administers the state Farmland Preservation Program. In 2003, a record 20,000 acres of farmland was preserved, meeting a goal set by Governor McGreevey. To date, 127,161 acres have been preserved statewide -- 40,181 of those under the Governor.

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